



File Code: 1950

Date: 4 January, 2008

Proposal for Stream and Riparian Restoration on Resurrection Creek (Phase II)

Dear Interested Citizen,

The Chugach National Forest, Seward Ranger District is currently preparing an environmental impact statement for the implementation of a stream and riparian restoration project along a two-mile segment of Resurrection Creek within active mining claims. The proposed project area is located about 3 miles upstream from Hope, Alaska and immediately downstream (north) from the Resurrection Pass Trailhead (*figure 1*). The environmental impact statement will evaluate the proposed restoration, as well as a supplemental mining plan of operations that will exclude mining operations from the restoration corridor to protect the restored ecosystem, and provide reasonable access to the mineral estates of adjoining claims.

The purpose of this letter is to provide information about the project and request your comments on the proposed restoration. Your comments will help guide the analysis and identify significant issues.

BACKGROUND

The Resurrection Creek watershed drains 161 square miles on the north side of the Kenai Peninsula, and the community of Hope, Alaska is located at the mouth of Resurrection Creek. Resurrection Creek was the site of Alaska's first gold rush over a century ago, and placer mining continues today. Resurrection Creek is also home to all five species of Pacific Salmon and numerous wildlife species. The Resurrection Pass Trail parallels much of Resurrection Creek and provides access to the watershed.

This proposed "Phase II" project would extend upon the "Phase I" restoration work completed by the Forest Service during 2005 and 2006 on a one-mile reach of Resurrection Creek, located about a mile upstream from the Resurrection Pass Trailhead (*figure 1*). These reaches were impacted by historic mining, and both of these projects were recommended in the *Resurrection Creek Landscape Assessment*, completed in 2002. This document is available online at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/pdf/resurrection_ck_lsa.pdf

In May 2002, the Forest Service surveyed and evaluated the "Phase I" project area as well as an undisturbed reference reach to develop preliminary alternatives for channel restoration on the proposed "Phase I" reach on Resurrection Creek. This analysis, the *Resurrection Creek Stream Channel and Riparian Restoration Analysis, River Kilometer 8.0 – 9.3*, will be used as an important basis for restoration in the proposed "Phase II" project and will be supplemented with additional data. This document is available online at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/pdf/res_creek_analysis.pdf



The “Phase I” Resurrection Creek Stream Restoration Project was evaluated in an Environmental Impact Statement finalized in November 2004. This analysis provided environmental documentation for the project area. This document is available online at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/pdf/res_creek_pdf/rcr-feis-110304.pdf

Additional information on the “Phase I” restoration project can be found online at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/news_releases/res_creek_rest.html

Further information on the “Phase II” project will also be made available at this website as it becomes available.

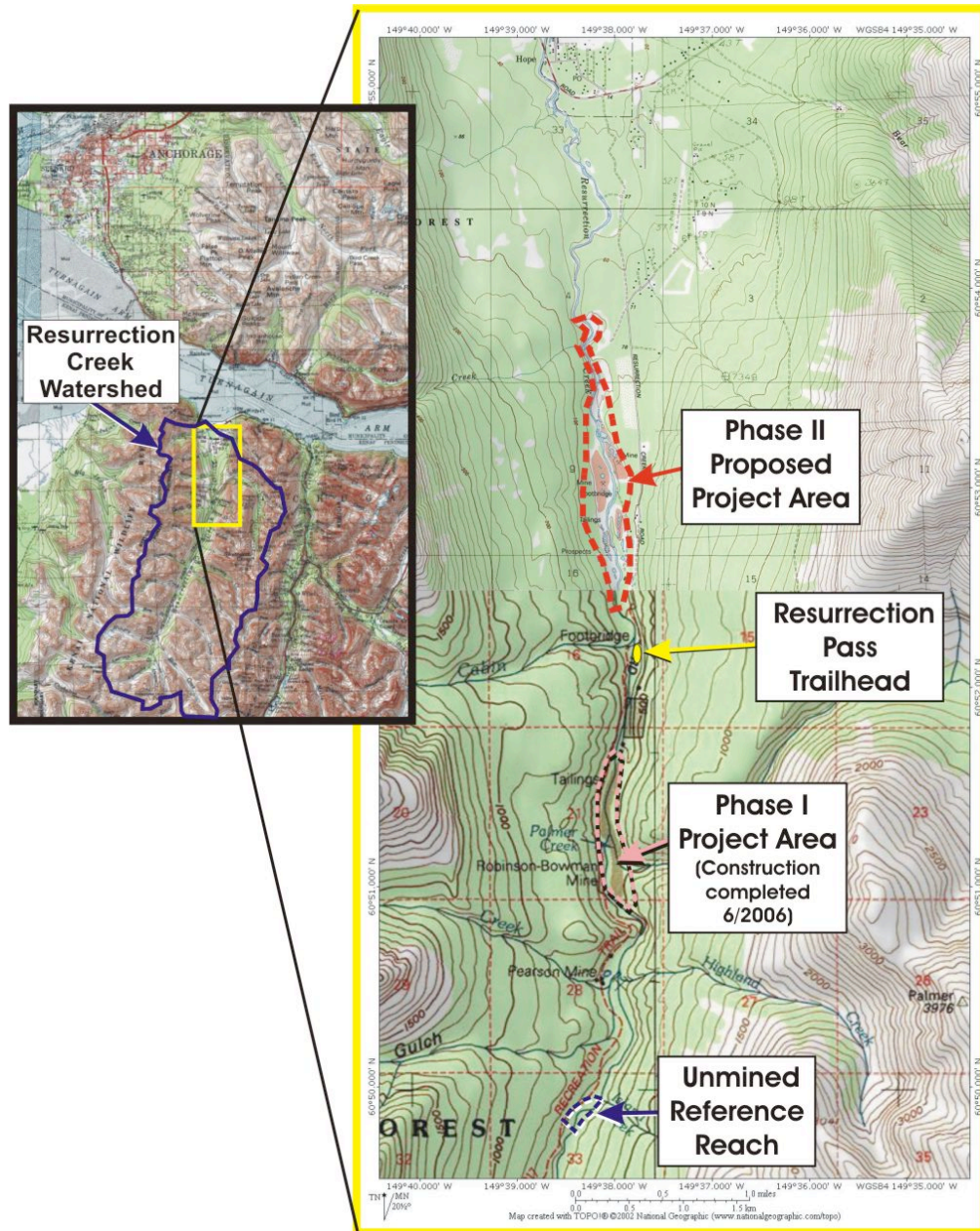


Figure 1. Location of the proposed Resurrection Creek Restoration Project.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The objectives of the proposed project are to restore degraded stream channel and habitat conditions along Resurrection Creek while providing reasonable access to the mineral estate for mining claim holders in the area. Early 20th Century mining operations degraded habitat on Resurrection Creek, straightened the stream channel, and cut off its floodplain by placing tailings piles along the banks. Natural recovery from these impacts has been minimal, and habitat conditions cannot improve without intervention.

This project will have the dual purposes of (1) rehabilitating degraded habitat on Resurrection Creek; and (2) allowing for mining to continue in an environmentally compatible manner that does not negatively impact the restored channels, floodplain, or habitat on Resurrection Creek.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The Seward Ranger District proposes to restore Resurrection Creek's channel, floodplain, and streamside vegetation to pre-mining conditions and enhance fish and riparian wildlife habitat. Restoration work would take place on and adjacent to Resurrection Creek along the two-mile project reach. Elements of the proposed project implementation include the following:

- ⊕ Providing access for heavy equipment, which may include a temporary bridge over Resurrection Creek.
- ⊕ Mechanical manipulation and grading of up to 200,000 cubic yards of mine tailings to restore the natural floodplain widths and elevations.
- ⊕ Construction of a meandering river channel and adjacent side channels that mimic natural conditions, include abundant habitat, and promote a self-sustaining riparian ecosystem.
- ⊕ Selective removal of beetle killed spruce and cottonwood trees, taken primarily from the valley floor and western terrace along the project area, for use in stream bank protection, habitat improvement, and floodplain stabilization.
- ⊕ Replacement of nutrient-rich soils over the restored floodplains, transplanted primarily from the western terrace of the project area, to improve growing conditions for native plant communities in the floodplains and riparian areas.
- ⊕ Re-vegetation of native plant species on constructed floodplains and riparian areas, including natural re-vegetation, seeding, and planting.

The project area lies within mining claims of the Hope Mining Company. Because the proposed stream restoration would occur within active mining claims, the Forest Service has worked with the mine claimants to establish a restoration corridor, where mining operations would be excluded in order to protect the restored ecosystem.

To accomplish the proposed restoration within the restoration corridor through these active claims, this project will address Hope Mining Company's proposed supplemental mining plan of operations which:

- 1) Provides the necessary protection for the proposed Resurrection Creek restoration efforts from existing approved mining operations and future mining operations within the restoration corridor; and
- 2) Includes proposed mining operations for seven areas adjacent to the proposed corridor. These seven areas will be analyzed concurrently with the proposed stream restoration elements.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

The Forest Service is currently evaluating preliminary issues for the proposed project related to the following topics:

- ⊕ The short-term impacts that may occur to various resources during channel reconstruction, such as increased noise and heavy equipment traffic, ground disturbance, and temporary water quality impacts.
- ⊕ The potential for the spread of invasive plants in the project area as a result of imported materials, access routes, and ground disturbance.
- ⊕ The short and long-term impacts of mining operations on water resources, soils, ecology, and wildlife.
- ⊕ The potential social and economic impacts to the community of Hope from changes in the type and amount of recreational use along Resurrection Creek.
- ⊕ The impacts of channel reconstruction on stream dynamics, including flood conveyance and ice buildup.
- ⊕ The impacts of the project on cultural resources along Resurrection Creek.

I intend that this proposed stream restoration project be conducted in a way that minimizes adverse impacts to resources and communities. Construction of the channel and floodplain would follow best management practices in order to protect soil and water quality. Cultural resource clearances would be obtained prior to construction activities, and social and economic impacts of the project would be analyzed in the environmental analysis. Biological evaluations for threatened, endangered, and/or sensitive species will also be conducted as part of the environmental analysis.

COMMENTS

We are interested in your thoughts and ideas on this project. If you wish to comment, please mail or e-mail written comments to:

Bill MacFarlane, Project Coordinator
Resurrection Creek Restoration Project
Chugach National Forest
3301 'C' Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-3998

wamacfarlane@fs.fed.us

Comments will be accepted until February 21, 2008. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including your name and address, will be part of the public record and available for public inspection. We will also accept and consider comments submitted anonymously. However, if you submit comments anonymously, you will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision (36 CFR 215, 217). For additional information, please call Bill MacFarlane at (907) 743-9434 or Brian Bair at (559) 920-1744. Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeni Evans". The signature is stylized, with a large, looped initial "J" and a cursive "Evans".

JENI BRADLEY EVANS
District Ranger

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